THEATRES—MOVIES

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MUSIC—ART

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The Stage and Its People

The Play Dancers, in a matinee at the Princess.

Lyola White in "The Passing Show of 1919".

Edith Day in "Irene".

Jane Cowl in "Smilin' Through".

Fokine at the Metropolitan Opera House.

Laurette Taylor in "One Night in Rome".

"The Unknown" in "Angel Face".

Behind the Scenes

With Philip Mindil

AS RICHARD BENNETT led the way into the star dressing-room at the Playhouse he sniffed with evident satisfaction and looked about. There was a distinct and delightful aroma of the perfumes and powders with which the softer sex adds to its charm. Now, Mr. Bennett is very much a man, and—well, it did seem strange.

"Ha!" cried the stalwart star of "For the Defense," flashing on the lights and revealing a row of dainty shoes and a line of lacy lingerie simultaneously, "I see it now. Miss George has been rehearsing."

For be it known that the Dresden china Grace George has a perfect right to that boudoir, built for her in her husband William A. Brady's theater, whenever it is not in actual use.

And Bennett was glad, glad about everything; glad she had used his dressing room; glad his play had been approved by the people who pay to see it and by the people who are paid to see it and print their praise or their plaints; glad that his company as well as himself had scored a triumph; glad that Henry Miller and Blanche Bates had "landed" with "The Famous Mrs. Fair," because they are both conscientious, capable actors, and glad that Frank Gillmore's little daughter, Margolo, had made her first "hit" in it, glad she had because she came of a theatrical family.

The impression was brought home anew that most actors are earnestly ambitious in their chosen profession, not alone for the living it brings them, but for the joy of achieving artistic success and the satisfaction of bestowing pleasure on those who patronize them.

"How do you get the results from your company?" was asked.

"I work with them, not over them," said Bennett. "I never ask any one to do a thing I could not and would not do myself. I ask nothing impossible or unnatural. All I ask is for the actor to submerge himself in the character he is playing. I ask him to see the character doing things and saying things in the way he thinks the character would do and say them.

"If an actor says to me, 'Oh, I can't do that' or 'say that,' I ask him to get inside the skin of the character and then direct himself from that point of view. And if he still insists 'the character would not say it that way' I say, 'How would he say it?' And if the actor is right we change the words of the playwright without changing his meaning."

"What is your ambition?" Always interesting to the playgoer.

"To be versatile," came the quick reply. "I think versatility is the acme of the Thespian art. Actors who are not versatile come—and they go. They wear out. Their personality lasts only a few years. But a personality never palls on the public when it knows that each time it is presented in a different visualization—in a new portrait.

"Take my father-in-law, Lewis Morrison, for instance. He played Faust so long because he had made such a decided impression in it and was afraid to venture time and money and reputation by trying something else. What was the result? He wore himself out and went from the largest cities to the secondary ones, then to the large towns and then to the smaller ones and finally to those of 5,000 or 6,000. If he had possessed the courage to come into New York and make productions in diversified characters he would never have been relegated to 'the provinces.'

"It is a terrible thing for an actor to dwindle from the largest cities to the smallest towns. I predict that if David Warfield does not stop playing 'The Music Master' and 'The Auctioneer' he will find himself in ten years playing towns of 5,000 and 6,000. He is too good an actor and too rich a man not to try to lift the thing that lifted him from so low to so high.

"Therefore, I am determined to go on producing new and widely varied things. Four weeks from now I expect to produce the first long Eugene O'Neill play in New York. I am in this play and will be in that and many others because I want to keep on doing things and not merely getting there in the easiest way.

"I have just turned down a fabulous guarantee of money and of fifty-two weeks' consecutive engagement by Roland West in 'The Unknown Purple' for that reason.

"I starved for years because I loved to act for the sake of acting and not for the thing that would bring the immediate dollar."

"How did you come to go on the stage?" Another timeworn but ever interesting query.

"I think it was inborn—that is, the desire. My mother had always wanted to be an actress, but my father's family bitterly opposed it. I come from a long line of Methodist ministers in New Jersey, and for a member of the Bennett family to become an actor was regarded as though he had turned Baptist or Episcopalian or Catholic.

"My father was a self-ordained minister or lay preacher, and my Uncle Henry was a regular minister. My grandfather was a community circuit rider in New Jersey and my great-great-great grandfather, who founded Bennett's Mills, the place where I was born, was a preacher, ran a saw mill, a flour mill and a general merchandise store. He lived in the old Bennett manor house about which the old slave huts are still to be found.

"My grandfather brought forth seventeen children from that house, and my grandmother sent nine of her sons to the Civil War, only three of whom came back."

"But how did you start to act?"

"Well, I just seemed naturally to take the lead in the charades we had in the school and Sunday school, and they broadened into a very bad dramatic society called the Carlton Club. We did light operas, melodramas and comedies—anything we could get hold of on which there were no royalties.

"Then I met Joe Coyne and told him I wanted to be a regular, for-sure-enough actor, and he sent me to his manager, Elmer Vance, who was touring with 'The Limited Mail.' He said if I would do two small parts and be the property man he would give me $20 a week. I jumped at the chance, and in the next year I played every male part in the long cast and even the character old maid when the lady who was doing it fell ill. I ended the season by playing the juvenile lead at $35 a week, which I thought great because that was what Joe Coyne was getting. In the company were Grace Sherwood, Harry Clay Blaney and Lew Bloom."

After seeing Mr. Bennett in Augustus Thomas's "Rio Grande," in "The Unknown Purple," as John Shand with Maude Adams in "What Every Woman Knows" and as the District Attorney in "For the Defense," no one can doubt his versatility.

His delight over the success of Frank Gillmore's pretty blond daughter Margolo, in "The Famous Mrs. Fair," prompted a visit to the stage door of Henry Miller's Theater and to her dressing-room, where one marveled no less at her wealth of capillary sunshine than at the charming courtesy of her "maid," who, though quite self-abnegating, was punctilious in her attention to the visitor's hat and coat and hobbling-aid.

"How did you feel," was asked, "when the first-nighters insisted on a curtain call for you, and Miss Bates so graciously pushed you forward?"

"Oh, I can't describe it," said the golden girl. "I was all a-tremble."

"Where did you get that name, Margolo?"

"I gave it to myself," she laughed. "I was christened 'Margaret,' but 'Margolo' was the nearest I could come to it as a tot, and it has clung to me ever since. If I had abandoned it when I went on the stage my friends wouldn't have known it was I."

"Have you been on long?"

"Yes," quite seriously, "two years. Before that I went to the Sargent School of Acting, and before that to a private school."

"What else have you played in?"

"'A Scrap of Paper' with Robert Hilliard and 'Up From Nowhere' with Norman Trevor. But this was my first really big chance."

"Do you want to tell your age?" came as hesitantly as if from an election board clerk.

"Oh, yes!" quite readily. "I'm twenty-one. How old did you think I was?"

"Eighteen." And this was honest.

"No, I'm not eighteen," said Miss Gillmore. "And I don't want to be. When I was eighteen I was not acting. I was trying to learn how."

"What is your ambition—to be a star?"

"No, just to do my very best on the stage."

"You come of a theatrical family," was suggested.

"Oh, yes! Of course, you know my father, Frank Gillmore. He is not acting now. He is too busy being secretary of the Actors' Equity Association. My mother is Laura MacGilvray, and she hasn't played for ten years or so. She's been too busy being a mother. My father's mother, Emily Thorne, was quite well known on the stage, both here and in England."

"And are there any other 'professional' members of the Gillmore family in your generation?"

"Yes," and Miss Gillmore indicated some one behind the interviewer. "There's the rest of my generation—Ruth. Now, she's eighteen, and she's played in 'The Betrothal.'"

The courteous attendant tripped modestly forward.

"And what are you playing now, Miss Ruth?"

The same Gillmore smile lighted up the second fair face.

"I'm playing, as you see, the part of a maid to Margolo."

"And do you like it?"

"As long as my adored 'mistress' gets over' and is interviewed by The Tribune."

Beneath a hand mirror, a powder puff and a pile of hairpins on the dressing table peeped a clipping of one of Briggs's daily cartoons from The Tribune.

"Where did you get this?" was asked.

"From a very good friend of mine."

"What is his name?"

"Briggs."

"You know him, then?"

"Well, I've never met him, but he is my friend, for he gives me my daily laugh."

Margot Kelly, surrounded by flowers and friends on her opening night as a modern Desdemona in "Carnival" at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre, admitted:

That her hair was its original color.

That she called that color "red."

That she got her family name from her Irish father and her given name from her French mother.

That she was born in England.

That she was educated in a convent just outside of Paris.

That she ran away from there—alone—not because of a romance, but to go on the stage with an English repertory company touring France, when she was fifteen.

That she eluded the pursuing nuns.

That her cosmopolitan training included France, Italy, London and three years in this country.

That she is twenty-three.

That she is "a quick study" and went on in this part at three days' notice and without a scene rehearsal, after doing the same thing a few years ago in "Pierre the Prodigal."

That she came over here in "A Little Bit of Fluff," which is just what she looks like. It was a failure, though, and she isn't.

That she has "turned down" six offers for musical comedy and farce this season, because she wanted to play something serious and, most of all, Juliet.

That her first public appearance was in Sudermann's "Veil of Content."

That she doesn't believe in marriage for an actress, as the stage and matrimony are two separate and distinct professions and cannot be combined with any hope of success in either—and,

That this is her first interview.

New Attractions of the Coming Week

MONDAY—At the Knickerbocker George W. Lederer will present "Angel Face," a new musical play with a score by Victor Herbert, who will direct the orchestra for the first performance. The book is by Harry B. Smith and the lyrics are by Robert B. Emith.

At the Théâtre Parisien "Les Bleus de l'Amour," a three-act comedy by Romain Coolus, is the new offering.

TUESDAY—At the Broadhurst Theater the Selwyns will present Jane Cowl in "Smilin' Through," by Allan Langdon Martin. Orme Caldara, Ethelbert Hales, Charlotte Granville, Elaine Inescourt, Philip Tonge and Marion Bertram are in the company.

Michel Fokine, creator of the Russian ballet, and Vera Fokina, its prima ballerina, will appear at the Metropolitan Opera House for their first and only American performance in a three-part program, supported by a symphonic orchestra of seventy-five, conducted by Josiah Zuro.

China on Our Stage

By Ishbel Ross

"WHEN the playwrights started out to write about China and the directors set "The Rose of China" on its melodious way and opened "East Is West," with Fay Bainter starring, they did not reckon on the local Chinese. Indignation has been aroused among restaurant keepers over the infamy of Charlie Yang, the chop suey villain in "East Is West." Complaints have been made over the representation of Chinese girls being sold at auction in the same play. Sam Shipman, who collaborated with John B. Hymer on "East Is West," says the objections are all nonsense. Guy Bolton, who worked with P. G. Wodehouse on the production of "The Rose of China," says the locale could be anywhere, and that the story was given a Chinese background merely because at the moment there was a vogue for Oriental plays.

The complaints, for the greater part, have been made to the Chinese Consulate. In a statement regarding them J. S. Tow, secretary of the consulate, says:

"Nowadays the Chinese people are supposed to be well known in this country. Plays are often seen imitating and exaggerating their life and customs. But, as the writers of these plays do not understand or know the real life of our people, they often are ridiculous and insulting to the Chinese. It is a pity that our people should innocently suffer this mockery and humiliation. We lament the worst caricatures that are put upon us and the most inconceivable misrepresentations, which can serve but to create ill feeling and contempt of the American public toward our people as a nation.

"In a play called 'East Is West' our girls are represented as being sold at auction. This is never done in China, as there was a strict law against it even in the days of the Manchu government. A Chinese is made to kidnap the girl of an American missionary in China, which is an inconceivable thing. Our people are supposed to be bitterly against Christianity, but the fact is that since the foreign missionaries have proved themselves to be real Christians discriminations against them have long vanished. The Chinese who own restaurants in this country are given the worst character. Indeed, the author has proved himself to be very skillful in expressing his impressions of and feeling toward the Chinese people through Ming Toy and Charlie Yang.

"We are portrayed as being what we are not. It is too injurious to the feeling of the two peoples to have this play continue unchanged. It is too serious to be a comedy, and the excuse that it is only to poke fun, to produce laughter and even to derive profit, is insufficient, considering the friendly relations between the two republics."

"It seems to me that this matter is being taken altogether too seriously," said Mr. Shipman when questioned on the subject. "In the first place, the play is supposed to represent China before the revolution. The trading in girls is a true picture of what occurred at the time. They were not sold as slaves. The lines in the play make the situation perfectly clear: 'We have no slavery in China. We bring our girls here to be adopted by those who can afford to take care of them.'

"As for Charlie Yang—well, there's a villain in every play. Undoubtedly much of the vice of New York has had its roots in Chinatown, and one is just as entitled to choose a Chinese as an American villain. Mr. Tow does not mention the noble characters at all. My main idea in writing this play was to show that you cannot Anglicize the Chinese any more than you can the Jew, the Pole or the Russian. But you can Americanize them all. I started out with the Wilsonian idea of the self-determination of races; that each must be left alone to work out its own destiny.

"I had no particular interest in making it a Chinese play, aside from the fact that after a long diet of pork chops one relishes some chop suey. And there seems to be a craving among the theatergoers for chop suey just at present. The plot would have been the same, no matter what the locale. Historic truth has nothing to do with artistic truth.

"I had expert advice on 'East Is West.' The play was carefully gone over by prominent Chinese here, and Chinese students from Columbia attended the rehearsals. They were enthusiastic about it."

Mr. Tow had less to say in objection to "The Rose of China." His comment on it was: "I saw a peculiar caricature of a Chinese priest. I have never seen a priest in China like this. Such a one may be found in the imagination of an artist, but not in everyday life. Is it not ridiculous that this character should be drawn in a play supposed to represent real Chinese life?"

Guy Bolton, who wrote the play, made the following statement as to the objections raised: "In a musical production characters are accentuated to some extent, but, then, it must be remembered that the story is developed for its laughter and artistry, not for its moral. It would be just as reasonable for Americans to object because the American hero marries a Chinese girl as it is for the Chinese to protest about my harmless priest. After all, the locale of the story could be anywhere. The plot happens to be laid in China because there is a demand for Chinese plays and the picturesque settings that go with them.

"The present-day public, which has been brought up to realism in all its truth and fiction, demands realism as well in its drama and musical comedy. Frankly, that is what we try to give them. In the plays I write I try to get the smallest possible number of straight character parts. What these so-called parts are made to do in the play is, to me, less important than the interest they create in themselves. So I try to make them human instead of stereotyped. You can shape the characters in your play any way that makes them interesting to the people who see and hear them. While situation is important, it is secondary to character in all plays and in comedies in particular."

Mr. Tow finds nothing but good in "The Son-Daughter." He says of it: "I was greatly surprised the other night when I saw this play. The surprise was that I never had seen a play so free from offense to us as this. I admire it, not because it presents better features of our people, but because there is no inconceivable exaggeration; not because it shows that the Chinese are patriotic, but because it proves they are much the same as Americans and that they enjoy, suffer, are happy and sad just as the American people. We must congratulate Mr. Belasco, the author of the play, for his appreciation of this essential in representing a foreign people. We must thank him for his doing justice to us and not deceiving the American public.

"Those who have seen 'East Is West' must go to see 'The Son-Daughter,' for their eyes and ears should be cleaned with spring water. Besides, it is worth while seeing because it teaches boys what patriotism is and girls what love should be. Such plays as this are scarce nowadays."